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Integration of Artificial Intelligence in Medical Oncology: Prediction of Treatment Response, Toxicity, and Survival

Lamia Aalaoui[1*], Saida Lamin[1], Rachid Tanz[1], Hassan Errihani[2]

[1]Department of Medical Oncology, Mohammed V Military Teaching Hospital, Rabat, Morocco
[2]Medical Oncology Department, National Institute of Oncology Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah, Rabat, Morocco

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***Corresponding author:** Lamia Aalaoui
Department of Medical Oncology, Mohammed V Military Teaching Hospital, Rabat, Morocco

Abstract **Original Research Article**

Artificial intelligence is increasingly transforming medical oncology by enabling the integration and analysis of large-scale and heterogeneous data derived from clinical records, medical imaging, genomics, transcriptomics, and digital pathology. Advances in machine learning and deep learning have led to the development of predictive models capable of anticipating treatment response, therapy-related toxicities, and patient survival with improved accuracy. By capturing complex and non-linear interactions inherent to cancer biology, multimodal artificial intelligence approaches consistently outperform conventional prognostic tools and single biomarkers. This review provides a concise and comprehensive synthesis of current applications of artificial intelligence in medical oncology, with a particular focus on response prediction, toxicity risk assessment, and survival modeling. It further examines the clinical implications of these technologies, addresses methodological, regulatory, ethical, and economic challenges, and emphasizes the importance of explainability, external validation, and prospective evaluation. Finally, the review outlines future perspectives for the safe and effective integration of artificial intelligence into routine oncology practice, positioning it as a key component of precision oncology rather than a replacement for clinical expertise.
Keywords: Artificial intelligence, Medical oncology, Precision oncology, Treatment response prediction, Toxicity prediction, Survival analysis, Radiomics, Digital pathology.

1. INTRODUCTION

Medical oncology is characterized by an increasing complexity of clinical decision making driven by tumor heterogeneity, expanding therapeutic options, and the rapid growth of biomedical data. High-throughput sequencing technologies, advanced medical imaging, digital pathology, and real-world clinical databases have generated multidimensional datasets that exceed the analytical capacity of conventional statistical methods [1]. Artificial intelligence has emerged as a transformative approach capable of integrating and interpreting these complex data through adaptive and self-learning algorithms [2].

Recent advances in deep learning architectures, particularly convolutional neural networks and transformer-based models, have demonstrated remarkable performance in medical imaging, histopathology, and multimodal data integration [3]. In oncology, artificial intelligence has shifted the focus from descriptive analytics toward predictive and dynamic modeling, with the aim of optimizing therapeutic selection, anticipating treatment-related toxicities, and improving survival estimation [4].

A conceptual comparison of decision-making approaches in medical oncology, including clinician judgment, conventional clinical scores, and artificial intelligence models, is presented in Table 1.

2. METHODS OF THIS REVIEW

This narrative review was conducted using a structured search of PubMed, MEDLINE, and Scopus databases, covering publications from January 2010 to December 2024. Search terms included artificial intelligence, machine learning, deep learning, oncology, radiomics, digital pathology, treatment response, toxicity, and survival. Priority was given to peer-reviewed original studies, large retrospective cohorts, prospective investigations, and methodological guidelines published in high-impact oncology and digital health journals [5]. Articles were selected based on clinical relevance, methodological rigor, and contribution to translational oncology.

Table 1: Comparison of decision-making approaches in medical oncology with bibliographic support

Aspect evaluated	Clinician judgment	Conventional clinical scores	Artificial intelligence models	Reference
Type of data used	Clinical experience and limited variables	Predefined clinical variables	Multimodal clinical, imaging, and molecular data	[1–3]
Ability to model complex interactions	Limited	Limited	High	[2,4]
Scalability and reproducibility	Limited	Moderate	High	[5]
Explainability	High	Moderate	Variable	[1,2]

3. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FOR PREDICTION OF TREATMENT RESPONSE

3.1 Radiomics and Quantitative Imaging

Radiomics represents one of the most established applications of artificial intelligence in oncology. By extracting large numbers of quantitative features from computed tomography, magnetic resonance imaging, and positron emission tomography, radiomic models capture intratumoral heterogeneity and tumor microenvironment characteristics that are not discernible by visual assessment [6]. These features have demonstrated predictive value for treatment response across multiple solid tumors.

In non-small cell lung cancer, deep learning models applied to baseline positron emission tomography combined with computed tomography have shown superior performance in predicting response to immune checkpoint inhibitors when compared with programmed death ligand one expression alone [7,8]. These findings support the clinical potential of non-invasive artificial intelligence based imaging biomarkers for early therapeutic stratification.

3.2 Digital Pathology and Multimodal Integration

The digitization of histopathological slides has enabled the application of deep learning to whole-slide images. Artificial intelligence models can identify morphological patterns associated with molecular alterations, immune infiltration, and therapeutic sensitivity [9]. Large pan-cancer studies have demonstrated that deep learning applied to histology can predict microsatellite instability and oncogenic mutations directly from routine hematoxylin and eosin stained slides [10].

The integration of digital pathology with genomic and transcriptomic data further enhances predictive accuracy. Multimodal artificial intelligence models combining imaging, pathology, and molecular features have demonstrated robust performance in predicting treatment response across colorectal, lung, and breast cancers [11].

3.3 Prediction of Response to Immunotherapy

Predicting response to immune checkpoint inhibitors remains challenging due to the complexity of tumor immune interactions. Artificial intelligence models integrating radiomic signatures, digital pathology features, tumor mutational burden, and immune gene expression profiles consistently outperform conventional biomarkers used in isolation [12]. Dynamic models incorporating early on-treatment imaging and circulating immune markers enable response prediction within weeks of treatment initiation, allowing timely therapeutic adaptation [13].

4. Artificial Intelligence for Prediction of Treatment Related Toxicities

4.1 Chemotherapy Induced Toxicities

Treatment related toxicities represent a major cause of morbidity and treatment discontinuation in oncology. Machine learning models integrating clinical characteristics, baseline laboratory parameters, comorbidities, and pharmacogenomic data demonstrate superior performance in predicting hematologic, renal, and neurotoxic events [14]. Artificial intelligence based febrile neutropenia risk models have shown improved accuracy compared with traditional clinical scoring systems, supporting individualized prophylactic strategies [15].

4.2 Toxicities of Targeted Therapies

Targeted therapies are associated with specific toxicity profiles that vary significantly between patients. Artificial intelligence models trained on pharmacogenomic and real-world clinical data have successfully predicted cardiotoxicity, hepatotoxicity, and dermatologic adverse events, enabling personalized monitoring and dose adjustment strategies [16].

4.3 Immune Related Adverse Events

Immune related adverse events represent a major limitation of immunotherapy. Artificial intelligence models integrating cytokine profiles, longitudinal laboratory data, and clinical variables have demonstrated the ability to predict severe immune related toxicities several weeks before clinical manifestation, thereby supporting proactive management strategies [17].

5. Artificial Intelligence for Survival Prediction

Traditional survival models such as Cox proportional hazards regression are limited in their ability to model high-dimensional, non-linear, and time-dependent oncologic data. Deep learning based survival models, including DeepSurv, have demonstrated superior predictive accuracy for overall and progression free survival [18]. Longitudinal radiomic analysis captures tumor evolution during treatment and correlates strongly with survival outcomes [19]. The integration of clinical, radiologic, and molecular data enables robust prognostic stratification in metastatic disease [20].

The major published studies evaluating artificial intelligence applications in medical oncology for treatment response, toxicity, and survival prediction are summarized in Table 2

Table 2: Major published studies on artificial intelligence applications in medical oncology

First author	Year	Cancer type	Data modality	Artificial intelligence approach	Clinical objective	Main results	Reference
Topol	2019	Pan-cancer	Clinical and digital health data	Conceptual and translational artificial intelligence frameworks	Clinical decision support	Established the paradigm of high-performance medicine and highlighted the central role of artificial intelligence in oncology	[1]
Esteva	2019	Pan-cancer	Multimodal clinical data	Deep learning architectures	Healthcare prediction and clinical decision making	Provided methodological foundations for deep learning applications in oncology and medicine	[2]
Lambin	2012	Solid tumors	Computed tomography and positron emission tomography	Radiomics and machine learning	Treatment response prediction	Demonstrated that quantitative imaging features reflect tumor phenotype and predict treatment response	[4]
Aerts	2014	Lung and head and neck cancers	Computed tomography imaging	Radiomic feature extraction and survival modeling	Survival prediction	Identified radiomic signatures strongly associated with overall survival	[6]
Sun	2021	Non small cell lung cancer	Positron emission tomography combined with computed tomography	Deep learning radiomics	Immunotherapy response prediction	Demonstrated superior prediction of response to immune checkpoint inhibitors compared with PD L1 expression	[7]
Trebeschi	2019	Melanoma and lung cancer	Computed tomography imaging	Machine learning radiomics	Immunotherapy response prediction	Identified non invasive radiomic biomarkers predictive of immunotherapy efficacy	[8]
Kather	2020	Gastrointestinal cancers	Digital histopathology slides	Convolutional neural networks	Molecular phenotype prediction	Demonstrated prediction of microsatellite instability directly from routine histology	[9]
Coudray	2018	Lung cancer	Digital histopathology images	Deep learning convolutional networks	Mutation prediction	Predicted oncogenic driver mutations from standard pathology slides	[10]
Vaidya	2022	Metastatic solid tumors	Multimodal clinical and molecular data	Deep learning survival models	Prognostic stratification	Demonstrated improved survival prediction compared with conventional clinical models	[11]
Huang	2021	Solid tumors	Clinical and laboratory parameters	Machine learning	Febrile neutropenia prediction	Outperformed traditional clinical risk scores for febrile neutropenia	[15]
Chen	2021	Solid tumors	Pharmacogenomic and clinical data	Machine learning	Targeted therapy toxicity prediction	Identified patients at high risk of cardiotoxicity and hepatotoxicity	[16]
Choi	2022	Multiple solid tumors	Clinical data and immune biomarkers	Supervised machine learning	Immune related toxicity prediction	Predicted severe immune related adverse events before clinical manifestation	[17]
Katzman	2018	Pan-cancer	Clinical survival data	DeepSurv deep learning model	Survival modeling	Demonstrated superior survival prediction compared with Cox proportional hazards regression	[18]

6. Clinical Implications

From a clinical perspective, artificial intelligence modifies decision making across the entire oncology care pathway. Prior to treatment initiation, predictive models support therapeutic selection by identifying patients most likely to benefit from specific systemic therapies. During treatment, continuous integration of clinical, biological, and imaging data allows early identification of non responders and patients at high risk of severe toxicity. After treatment, artificial intelligence contributes to individualized prognostic assessment and optimization of follow up strategies, thereby enhancing treatment efficacy and patient safety [21].

7. Readiness of Oncology Centers for Artificial Intelligence

The successful implementation of artificial intelligence in oncology requires institutional readiness. Oncology centers must possess standardized imaging protocols, interoperable electronic health records, and robust data governance frameworks. Clinician training in the interpretation and responsible use of artificial intelligence outputs is essential. Multidisciplinary oversight involving clinicians, data scientists, and regulatory experts is required to ensure ethical and clinically meaningful deployment.

8. Comparison with Conventional Clinical Tools

Artificial intelligence based models consistently outperform traditional clinical scores and single biomarkers by integrating multimodal and dynamic data. While clinician expertise remains essential for contextual interpretation, artificial intelligence provides scalable and reproducible predictions that complement human decision making.

9. Pitfalls and Misuse of Artificial Intelligence

Despite its potential, artificial intelligence carries inherent risks when improperly developed or deployed. Overreliance on algorithmic predictions may lead to automation bias. Dataset shift resulting from differences between training and real-world populations can compromise model performance. Inadequate external validation and limited transparency further increase the risk of misleading predictions. Continuous monitoring and clinician oversight are therefore essential [22].

10. Regulatory, Ethical, and Data Governance Considerations

Artificial intelligence systems in oncology increasingly qualify as software as a medical device and must comply with regulatory frameworks established by the Food and Drug Administration, the European Medicines Agency, and European conformity authorities [23]. Ethical deployment requires patient consent, data privacy protection, and governance strategies such as federated learning to minimize data sharing risks [24].

11. Health Economics and Resource Optimization

Artificial intelligence driven decision support has the potential to reduce healthcare costs by limiting ineffective treatments, preventing severe toxicities, and optimizing surveillance strategies. Preliminary economic analyses suggest improved cost effectiveness of immunotherapy selection when guided by artificial intelligence based models [25].

12. Future Perspectives

Over the next decade, artificial intelligence in oncology is expected to evolve toward foundation models trained on large scale multi institutional datasets. The development of digital twins simulating individual patient trajectories may enable in silico testing of therapeutic strategies. Real time learning systems integrating wearable devices and circulating biomarkers are likely to further enhance precision oncology [26].

13. Limitations

This review is limited by the heterogeneity of published studies and the predominance of retrospective analyses. Prospective validation and randomized clinical trials incorporating artificial intelligence guided decision making remain necessary to confirm clinical utility.

14. CONCLUSION

Artificial intelligence is poised to become a cornerstone of precision oncology by enabling accurate prediction of treatment response, toxicity, and survival. When developed and implemented responsibly, artificial intelligence enhances clinical decision making and improves patient outcomes. Artificial intelligence will not replace oncologists, but oncologists who effectively integrate artificial intelligence into clinical practice are likely to deliver safer, more efficient, and more personalized cancer care.

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